

Senate Bill No. 1225

CHAPTER 49

An act to amend Section 259 of the Code of Civil Procedure, and to amend Section 71601 of the Government Code, relating to courts.

[Approved by Governor June 17, 2004. Filed with
Secretary of State June 18, 2004.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1225, Morrow. Court officers.

(1) The California Constitution authorizes a court to order a cause to be tried by a temporary judge who is a member of the State Bar, on stipulation of the parties litigant. Existing statutory law sets forth the duties of court commissioners.

This bill would revise a related provision of statutory law to conform to the constitutional provision described above. The bill would also revise the duties of a court commissioner.

(2) Existing law defines the term "subordinate judicial officer" for purposes of court administration and specifies that the term includes certain commissioners, referees, and judges pro tempore.

This bill would revise those specified examples of subordinate judicial officers, and make related nonsubstantive changes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 259 of the Code of Civil Procedure is amended to read:

259. Subject to the supervision of the court, every court commissioner shall have power to do all of the following:

(a) Hear and determine ex parte motions for orders and alternative writs and writs of habeas corpus in the superior court for which the court commissioner is appointed.

(b) Take proof and make and report findings thereon as to any matter of fact upon which information is required by the court. Any party to any contested proceeding may except to the report and the subsequent order of the court made thereon within five days after written notice of the court's action. A copy of the exceptions shall be filed and served upon opposing party or counsel within the five days. The party may argue any exceptions before the court on giving notice of motion for that purpose within 10 days from entry thereof. After a hearing before the court on the exceptions, the court may sustain, or set aside, or modify its order.



(c) Take and approve any bonds and undertakings in actions or proceedings, and determine objections to the bonds and undertakings.

(d) Act as temporary judge when otherwise qualified so to act and when appointed for that purpose, on stipulation of the parties litigant. While acting as temporary judge the commissioner shall receive no compensation therefor other than compensation as commissioner.

(e) Hear and report findings and conclusions to the court for approval, rejection, or change, all preliminary matters including motions or petitions for the custody and support of children, the allowance of temporary spousal support, costs and attorneys' fees, and issues of fact in contempt proceedings in proceedings for support, dissolution of marriage, nullity of marriage, or legal separation.

(f) Hear actions to establish paternity and to establish or enforce child and spousal support pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 4251 of the Family Code.

(g) Hear, report on, and determine all uncontested actions and proceedings subject to the requirements of subdivision (d).

SEC. 2. Section 71601 of the Government Code is amended to read:

71601. For purposes of this chapter, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) "Appointment" means the offer to and acceptance by a person of a position in the trial court in accordance with this chapter and the trial court's personnel policies, procedures, and plans.

(b) "Employee organization" means any organization that includes trial court employees and has as one of its primary purposes representing those employees in their relations with the trial court.

(c) "Hiring" means appointment as defined in subdivision (a).

(d) "Mediation" means effort by an impartial third party to assist in reconciling a dispute regarding wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment between representatives of the trial court and the recognized employee organization or recognized employee organizations through interpretation, suggestion, and advice.

(e) "Meet and confer in good faith" means that a trial court or representatives as it may designate, and representatives of recognized employee organizations, shall have the mutual obligation personally to meet and confer promptly upon request by either party and continue for a reasonable period of time in order to exchange freely information, opinions, and proposals, and to endeavor to reach agreement on matters within the scope of representation. The process should include adequate time for the resolution of impasses where specific procedures for resolution are contained in this chapter or in a local rule, or when the procedures are utilized by mutual consent.



(f) “Personnel rules,” “personnel policies, procedures, and plans,” and “rules and regulations” mean policies, procedures, plans, rules, or regulations adopted by a trial court or its designee pertaining to conditions of employment of trial court employees, subject to meet and confer in good faith.

(g) “Promotion” means promotion within the trial court as defined in the trial court’s personnel policies, procedures, and plans, subject to meet and confer in good faith.

(h) “Recognized employee organization” means an employee organization that has been formally acknowledged to represent trial court employees by the county under Sections 3500 to 3510, inclusive, prior to the implementation date of this chapter, or by the trial court under Rules 2201 to 2210, inclusive, of the California Rules of Court, as those rules read on April 23, 1997, Sections 70210 to 70219, inclusive, or Article 3 (commencing with Section 71630) of this chapter.

(i) “Subordinate judicial officer” means an officer appointed to perform subordinate judicial duties as authorized by Section 22 of Article VI of the California Constitution, including, but not limited to, a court commissioner, probate commissioner, child support commissioner, referee, traffic trial commissioner, traffic referee, juvenile court referee, juvenile hearing officer, and temporary judge.

(j) “Transfer” means transfer within the trial court as defined in the trial court’s personnel policies, procedures, and plans, subject to meet and confer in good faith.

(k) “Trial court” means a superior court.

(l) “Trial court employee” means a person who is both of the following:

(1) Paid from the trial court’s budget, regardless of the funding source. For the purpose of this paragraph, “trial court’s budget” means funds from which the presiding judge of a trial court, or his or her designee, has authority to control, authorize, and direct expenditures, including, but not limited to, local revenues, all grant funds, and trial court operations funds.

(2) Subject to the trial court’s right to control the manner and means of his or her work because of the trial court’s authority to hire, supervise, discipline, and terminate employment. For purposes of this paragraph only, the “trial court” includes the judges of a trial court or their appointees who are vested with or delegated the authority to hire, supervise, discipline, and terminate.

(m) A person is a “trial court employee” if and only if both paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (l) are true irrespective of job classification or whether the functions performed by that person are identified in Rule 810 of the California Rules of Court. The phrase “trial



court employee” includes those subordinate judicial officers who satisfy paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (l). The phrase “trial court employee” does not include temporary employees hired through agencies, jurors, individuals hired by the trial court pursuant to an independent contractor agreement, individuals for whom the county or trial court reports income to the Internal Revenue Service on a Form 1099 and does not withhold employment taxes, sheriffs, and judges whether elected or appointed. Any temporary employee, whether hired through an agency or not, shall not be employed in the trial court for a period exceeding 180 calendar days, except that for court reporters in a county of the first class, a trial court and a recognized employee organization may provide otherwise by mutual agreement in a memorandum of understanding or other agreement.

